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ABSTRACT

A pluralistic framework for the analysis of the American culture is presented. The published results of the Coleman report are used as an example of how the conceptual framework can be operationalized. The dependent variable of the analysis is one measuring social performance. The independent variables measure some aspect of themes, behavior styles, and information components. Social performance within the "mainstream culture" can be measured using the tests of educational achievement administered in the public schools. Using the score on the Verbal Ability Scale (which according to Coleman is the best criterion of achievement) as the measure of social performance in the mainstream culture, it was found that the groups with the highest performance levels are whites and Oriental Americans. Southern blacks constitute the group with the lowest score. According to Coleman the test of general information probes areas likely to have become known through out-of-school activities. The high correlation between group rankings on Verbal Ability and General Information indicates the relevance of these information components to social performance within the mainstream culture. (Author/JM)

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THE RELEVANCE OF ANTHROPOLOGY FOR U.S. DOMESTIC SOCIAL POLICY

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relevance of anthropological theory and concepts to U.S. domestic social policy. Domestic policy is to a large extent determined and sanctioned by judicial and legislative decisions. Such decisions are always influenced by the decision makers' assumptions about human behavior and human groups. Sometimes these assumptions are explicated and documented by references to specific social science documents, more often they are not. A review of some specific decisions is instructive.

In 1896 the Supreme Court sanctioned the "separate but equal" doctrine of race relations by ruling that legalized racial segregation did not violate the Constitution. The argument of this decision rested on the assumptions that there are racial instincts and that legislative or judicial action does not produce attitude change. With respect to the latter assumption, the language of the decision reads as if it were lifted directly from the writings of William Graham Sumner, the influential sociologist of the day who maintained that "stateways cannot change folkways." Since then it has been shown by social psychologists (see Bem 1970) that stateways can change folkways, that legislation and court decisions can change the hearts and minds of men.

In 1954 the Supreme Court reversed its earlier decision ruling that racial segregation in the public schools was inherently unequal and a violation of Constitutional rights. This time specific social science documents were cited in the decision. The Court cited, for example, a study conducted by Clark and Clark (1965) which showed that black children as young as three years reject black dolls as inferior to white dolls. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in his 1954 opinion:

> To separate (black children) from others of similar age and qualification solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. (Bem 1970:67)

A more recent example, this time from the legislative branch, of reliance on social science knowledge comes from the maneuverings over Nixon's income maintenance plan. One barrier to this plan when it was in committee was the belief that income maintenance would simply increase the natural laziness of poor people (Cook 1970). Daniel Moynihan asked the Director of Research of OEO for immediate data on this issue which was just coming in from a project designed to test the affects of income maintenance. The preliminary results of this project showed that those who had the income subsidy worked harder. According to one source (Cook 1970) these results helped to get Nixon's plan out of committee.

These examples illustrate that U.S. decision makers do seek knowledge and that this knowledge does influence their decisions. The work in numerous social science fields is now frequently reviewed. The scholarly work in the social science fields most visible in Washington (sociology, social psychology, and economics), however, does not bear on a crucial assumption made about the American culture which has given direction to more than one domestic program. This is that the American culture is homogeneous.

When there is one set of cultural themes, information components, and behavior styles exhibited and sanctioned in a society, this society will be defined here as culturally homogeneous. In a culturally homogeneous society we would expect one explanatory model for social performance to hold for all members of the society. Cultural homogeneity implies that there is one

dimension along which the life styles exhibited by members of a given society can be judged and understood. There is the normative style and anything departing from this norm is either an elitist or a defective style. Such an assumption has led in the United States to uniform welfare programs which treat all people needing welfare as if they were alike. Oscar Lewis' concept of the culture of poverty has not helped this tendency. The key words—Headstart, Upward Bound, culturally deprived, the culturally disadvantaged—associated with many U.S. poverty programs give evidence of an underlying notion of defectiveness and backwardness.

When Jensen (1969) decided that the mean difference in IQ between Blacks and Whites must have a genetic basis because, among other reasons, middle class blacks score lower than middle-class whites, he too is assuming cultural homogeneity. In order to reach this conclusion Jensen must assume that middle-class blacks live in the same environment and internalize the same set of norms, values, and above all, beliefs about themselves, as middle-class whites. Anyone who has read Grier and Cobbs' (1968) book, Black Rage, carefully, and who understands the effect of cultural heritage, cannot take Jensen seriously.

Decision makers are not entirely to blame for this unidimensional perception of the American culture. The assumption of cultural homogeneity underlies most empirical social science research. Research designs usually include the sampling of people and structural units. The idea of including subcultural units is rarely considered. The result is that the conclusions reached are thought to be generalizable to the entire population. It was this kind of social science approach which led Moynihan (1965) to the conclusion that "family disorganization" among American Negroes (note the assumption of defectiveness and deviation from the norm in Moynihan's

phraseology) is a prime explanatory variable of Black social performance. Another study (see Henderson 1967) empirically tested Moynihan's conclusions and found that family structure has no relation to Black social performance. These studies indicate the dangers of generalizing explanatory constructs.

When there is more than one set of cultural themes, information components, and behavior styles exhibited and sanctioned in a society, this society will be defined as culturally heterogeneous. In such a society we would expect different explanatory models for a given set of phenomena to hold for different groups in the society. An example of the use of cultural pluralism as an underlying, but unstated, assumption determining the analysis procedure of one social science document can be seen in the following quote which refers to the Coleman (1966) report on Equality of Educational Opportunity:

> White achievement appears to be highly sensitive to family background characteristics and apparently relatively insensitive to either of the two school factors. Negro achievement is sensitive to all three sets of variables but less so to family background than is the achievement of the whites. Discussion of the relative importance of these sets of variables without first defining the relevant groups is thus often misleading. (Smith 1968:387)

Recent work (see Cohen 1969; Coleman 1966; Johnson and Sanday 1971; Sanday and Staelin 1971) indicates that the American culture is pluralistic. The importance of the pluralistic concept in relation to domestic programs lies in the fact that the beliefs, values, information repertoire, and life styles of the target populations must be carefully considered in terms of the differential effectiveness such programs may have in achieving stated goals. A program may be successful for one segment of the population but not for another. An example is the public school system, which has been far more successful for white Americans than it has for black Americans if we use educational achievement tests as a measure of success.

The problem confronting anthropologists is to develop a conceptual framework for the analysis of cultural pluralism and to empirically delineate various subcultural units. Subcultural units will be defined in terms of constellations of themes, behavior styles and information components exhibited by members of a group which differ from those shared by members of other groups. In delineating such groups in the United States, recognition must be given to the existence of a mainstream cultural unit which is the locus of power, and control. When the concept of the mainstream or majority culture exists in a pluralistic society, people in such a society can be seen as falling into one of the following categories:

1. Mainstreamer[1] -- Member of the mainstream culture only (those people who have been exposed to and have assimilated the set of themes, behavior styles, and information components related to mainstream social performance).

2. Bi-cultural -- Member of the mainstream culture and some other cultural unit (those people who have been exposed to and can exhibit the set of themes, behavior styles, and information components which allows them to perform acceptably in the mainstream culture and some other cultural unit).

3. Culturally Different -- Peripheral member of the mainstream culture, primary social performance is in some other cultural unit (those people who have been exposed to and have assimilated the set of themes, behavior styles, and information components related to social performance in a non-mainstream cultural unit).

4. Culturally Deprived[2] -- Peripheral member of any cultural unit due to limited access and exposure to concepts and experiences (a characteristic often of institutionalized and sensorially limited individuals).

Figure 1 presents a diagrammatic conceptualization of these categories in terms of degree of exposure to the defining dimensions of a subcultural unit. The problem is to empirically delineate the people falling into the categories illustrated in Figure 1. It cannot be assumed that these categories are determined by standard variables such as race, national origin, or social class. Persons of different races, national origin and social class could conceivably fall into any one of the categories delineated in Figure 1.

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the units delineated at one point in time are static units. As pointed out by Johnson and Sanday (1971) subcultural systems are open systems. Because of the mechanism of intracultural diffusion the members of these systems are in differing degrees articulated to the mainstream culture and hence can share elements of that culture. Depending on the barriers to diffusion, subcultural systems definable at one point in time on the basis of certain unique characteristics may over time become assumed into the mainstream culture.

With these constraints in mind, the empirical problem will be (1) to find the constellation of variables measuring themes, behavior styles and information components which are related to successful performance within cultural units; and (2) using these variables, to empirically separate people into groups with respect to their social performance within cultural units. Social performance within a cultural unit is defined in terms of the behaviors which are accepted and valued.

The dependent variable of the analysis is one measuring social performance. The independent variables are those measuring some aspect of themes, behavior styles, and information components. Social performance within the mainstream culture can be measured using the tests of educational achievement administered

in the public schools. These tests are consciously designed according to Coleman et al. (1966:218) "to determine the degree to which a child has assimilated a culture appropriate to modern life in the United States." Similar tests are not readily available for measuring social performance in other U.S. cultural contexts, with the exception, possibly, of one instrument which has been developed to measure knowledge of Black culture (Penick 1970).[3]

The raw data of the Coleman report (collected in 1965), which is available on request to researchers from the Office of Education, can be used to empirically derive the mainstreamers and to gain some insight into those falling in the other categories illustrated in Figure 1. These data were collected from more than 645,000 pupils in the first, third, sixth, ninth and twelfth grades in 4,000 public schools all over the United States. The instruments administered cover 103 variables measuring educational achievement, general information, student background characteristics, teacher characteristics, school environment, and characteristics of principals and superintendents. The student background characteristics can be used to measure the themes, behavior styles, and information components related to social performance in the mainstream culture. Since these data touch only peripherally on the defining dimensions of social performance in non-mainstream cultural contexts, we can derive a notion of these contexts only by inference.

For some preliminary indication of the major cultural units in the American society and how they fit into the conceptualization presented in Figure 1, the published results of this report are instructive. These results include the mean scores on all the variables for each of the several groups isolated by Coleman for analysis, and the intercorrelation matrix for each group. These groups were predetermined on the basis of responses to

questions determining place of birth, and whether or not the student was Negro, White, American Indian, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, or Oriental American.

Using the score on the Verbal Ability Scale (according to Coleman 1966:292, the best criterion of achievement) as the measure of social performance in the Mainstream Culture, it can be seen by examining Table 1 that the groups with the highest performance levels are Whites and Oriental Americans. Southern Blacks constitute the group with the lowest score. The mean scores on the general information scale used in this study are also reported in Table 1. According to Coleman (1966:583) the test of general information probes areas likely to have become known through out-of-school rather than curriculum activities. Thus, this test probably measures information components available to the mainstreamer. The high correlation between group rankings on Verbal Ability and General Information indicates the relevance of these information components to social performance within the mainstream culture.

Figure 2 presents the groups isolated by the Coleman report in terms of the conceptual framework of Figure 1. Until further analysis is possible Whites and Oriental Americans can only be classified as mainstreamers or bi-cultural Americans. When measures of the social performance of these groups in other possible cultural contexts are available, we can distinguish the mainstreamers from those who are bi-cultural. The remaining groups can be classified as culturally different on the basis of the numerous ethnographies indicating that the social performance of these groups is uniquely different from that of mainstreamers.

By concentrating on pre-defined groups the above analysis excludes the individuals from any one of these groups who may belong in another category. This can be done only by carrying out the analysis proposed above using the raw data. Such an analysis would provide a far more detailed picture both

of existing subcultural units and of the members of these units who are moving toward the mainstream. For example, it is clear from Hannerz' ethnography (1969) of a Black ghetto that there are Blacks who could be classified in the mainstreamer or bi-cultural categories.

A pluralistic framework for the analysis of the American culture has been presented. The published results of the Coleman report were used as an example of how the conceptual framework could be operationalized. For a thorough empirical analysis of the American culture in terms of the framework presented, anthropologists must work toward developing suitable measures of social performance and an understanding of the defining dimensions of the cultural contexts which differ from the mainstream context. Such research is essential for understanding who in our society can be viewed as a mainstream American, a bi-cultural American, a culturally different American, a culturally deprived American, or a culturally deprived ethnic.

Such an understanding is essential for mounting effective domestic social programs. Programs such as Nixon's income maintenance plan, the numerous job programs, and the public educational system must be structured in terms of the cultural world or worlds of the target population if success in reaching stated goals is expected. Such an understanding may have oriented Jensen, and those who think like him, to an analysis of the methods, assumptions, and goals of the Headstart program, rather than looking to the genetic inferiority of Blacks as an explanation for the "failure" of this program to reach its goals.

FOOTNOTES

[1] "Mainstreamer" is a term employed with a somewhat different meaning by Hannerz (1969:38) to describe ghetto dwellers "who conform most closely to mainstream American assumptions about the 'normal' life."

[2] Cohen (1969:838) presents a similar definition of culturally deprived. However, Cohen includes in her definition children from low-income environments who by virtue of their position in society may have limited access to the kinds of information usuable in the public schools. Such children would be considered culturally deprived in terms of the framework presented in Figure 1 only if they were socialized within the mainstream culture. Those who are socialized in some other cultural context and who have limited access to the concepts and experiences characteristic of this context would also be considered culturally deprived.

[3] This instrument, known as the Penick Inventory, measures information about the Black culture and value laden assumptions about Black behavior patterns. It remains to be discovered whether the scores on the Penick inventory are correlated with Black social performance.

FIGURE 1. TYPES OF PEOPLE IN A CULTURALLY PLURALISTIC SOCIETY WITH A "MAINSTREAM" CULTURAL UNIT: U.S. SOCIETY

	Mainstream Unit		Other Cultural Unit or Units* (Called Subcultures)	
	Set of Themes, Information Components and Behavioral Styles Related to Successful Performance		Set of Themes, Information Components and Behavioral Styles Related to Successful Performance	
	High Exposure and Adoption	Low Exposure and Adoption	High Exposure and Adoption	Low Exposure and Adoption
Mainstreamer	X			
Bi-cultural American	X		X	
Culturally Different American		X	X	
Culturally Deprived Mainstreamer		X		
Culturally Deprived Ethnic		X		X

* All members of other cultural units have at least a minimal exposure to the mainstream culture due to a mandatory public school system.

FIGURE 2. SOME TYPES OF CULTURAL GROUPS IN THE U.S. SOCIETY INDICATED BY DATA FROM THE COLEMAN REPORT

	Groups Identified In Coleman Report
MAINSTREAMERS	Whites Oriental Americans
BI-CULTURAL	
CULTURALLY DIFFERENT	Mexican Americans Indian Americans Puerto Ricans Negroes
CULTURALLY DEPRIVED	Members of any of the above groups who are sensorially limited or have experienced limited access to concepts and experiences.

TABLE 1. RANK ORDER OF GROUPS SEPARATED FOR ANALYSIS BY COLEMAN REPORT (1966) BY MEAN SCORE ON VERBAL ABILITY SCALE AND GENERAL INFORMATION SCALE (Twelfth Graders Only)

Rank Order	Group	Mean Score On Verbal Ability Scale	Rank Order	Mean Score General Information Scale
1	White, North	67.6352	1	56.2185
2	White, South	65.0184	2	53.4755
3	Oriental Americans	62.9378	3	50.9749
4	Mexican Americans	53.9819	5	43.3183
5	Indian Americans	53.7153	4	45.2798
6	Negroes, North	52.7150	6	42.4281
7	Puerto Ricans	52.6683	7	41.0301
8	Negroes, South	46.2347	8	37.5354

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